

# Son of Man

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 27 September 2009

Preacher: Darrell Johnson

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, Sharon and I had the privilege of living in Manila, the Philippines, from 1985 to 1989. And during those years, God brought into my life a man named Mansour, a big man, six foot, three inches, 250 pounds, born and raised in Iran, and at the time we first met, a Muslim.

Mansour had fled Iran when the Shah was deposed in the revolution led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Mansour first fled to Hong Kong and then to Manila, where he went to work for a Jewish manufacturing export business run by an Italian Catholic from New York.

Soon after moving to Manila, he met, fell in love with, and married, the daughter of the Catholic running the Jewish business.

When I became the pastor of Union Church of Manila, Mansour's wife had begun worshipping with that Protestant congregation. She was on fire for Jesus, as she said, and she kept asking Mansour to come and hear the new preacher in town, Samoa, who would help him understand why she was on fire for Jesus.

Well, he finally agreed to do so, but for only four weeks, after which she had to agree to leave him alone and never bug him again about their Christian-Muslim conflict.

[ 1 : 35 ] The four Sundays that Mansour chose to worship at Union Church happened to be the four Sundays of the Advent Christmas season. He was, on the one hand, touched by the sights and sounds of the season, but he was, on the other hand, extremely agitated by what I was saying about Jesus.

Through his wife, he asked if I would be willing to have lunch with him and let him express his agitation to me. Six foot, three inches, 250 pounds.

So we met. The first time was pretty tense. The second time was more relaxed, and I felt free to suggest to him that he began to read the Gospels, beginning with the Gospel of John.

The third time, we actually had time to talk about what he was reading. Then we met a fourth time in a Mexican restaurant.

What a world. A North American Christian of Swedish descent eating Mexican burritos with a Muslim from Iran and Manila. During the lunch, he shared that he had finished reading John and was now into Matthew, which he much preferred.

[ 2 : 54 ] So what do you think? I asked. Never did a man speak the way this man speaks. He answered. I pointed out that another Middle Easterner, one of the temple guards who was sent to arrest Jesus, said the same thing when he came back without Jesus.

John 7, 46. Never did a man speak the way this man speaks. And then Mansour began to cry.

Right there in the Mexican restaurant. May I know why you're crying? I asked. Because, he said, I think I could come to love Jesus.

After a few minutes of sacred silence, I asked, is there more to your tears? Yes, he said. I am afraid. I am afraid for my family.

What do you mean? I asked. If I choose to love Jesus, my brothers will think of me as a traitor and they will likely kill me. And he just cried and cried and cried.

[ 4 : 07 ] And so did I. As we were leaving the restaurant, Mansour turned to me and said, tell me again why Jesus is worth the risk.

In the text Ray read for us, Matthew chapter 16, verses 13 to 28, Jesus claims to be the son of man. Verse 13. Who do people say the son of man is? Verse 21. The son of man must go to Jerusalem and die. And verse 28. There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the son of man coming in his glory.

It is Jesus use of the title, the son of man that puts him in a class all by himself. It is Jesus use of this term, son of man, that makes the risk worth it.

Matthew is careful to tell us that Jesus speaks this way in the first century city of Caesarea Philippi. Now, Caesarea Philippi is located about 40 kilometers north of the Sea of Galilee.

[ 5 : 21 ] It's the second body of water. It's the second body of water. It's the second body of water. You see there at the southernmost base of beautiful Mount Hermon. Now, what we need to know about Caesarea Philippi is that it was famous for its cultural and religious pluralism.

Let me say that again. It is famous for its cultural and religious pluralism. The point being that pluralism is not a new phenomenon.

Jesus of Nazareth has made astounding claims about himself in the midst of religious pluralism right from the beginning.

Jesus is not afraid of pluralism. Jesus can hold his own in the pluralistic marketplace of religions and spiritualities and ideologies. In its earliest days, Caesarea Philippi was called Balinus in honor of the Canaanite fertility god Baal.

When the Greeks invaded the region, they changed the name to Panaeus in honor of the Greek god of nature, Pan, the All. After the Romans moved in, Herod the Great built a huge white marble temple in the city to the glory of Caesar, who had given Herod the city.

[ 6 : 37 ] In that temple, religious services were held regularly in honor of all the Caesars, who by that time were beginning to be revered as gods. In Jesus' day, Herod the Great's son, Philip, ruled the area and changed the name from Caesarea to Caesarea Philippi to distinguish it from the other Caesarea that's along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

And in honor of Caesar Augustus, who from his birth was being honored as a son of a god. It is in that city, in a city much like our city, that Jesus poses the question, revealing his own self-consciousness.

Who do people say the Son of Man is? Who indeed? It is a fact of history. Jesus of Nazareth's favorite way of referring to himself is to use the term the Son of Man.

The term occurs in the New Testament 80 times. 77 times on the lips of Jesus referring to himself. Three times on the lips of others referring to Jesus.

80 times the Son of Man. Interesting, because the most frequently used term by others to refer to Jesus was Christ, Greek for Messiah.

[ 8 : 00 ] Used so frequently that Christ became an equivalent, a substitute name for Jesus. But of all the names and titles and designations available for his use, Jesus of Nazareth chose the Son of Man.

A fact emphasized by all four Gospels. Now this for me is one of the many datum that gives the New Testament what G.B. Phillips called the Ring of Truth.

As you likely know, many in our day argue that the New Testament has put words into Jesus' mouth. The authors of the New Testament have put words into Jesus' mouth which he himself never said.

It's argued that the historical Jesus, the real Jesus, did not actually say what he's recorded to say. Instead it is argued that we have the church's reconstruction of Jesus.

If this is so, how do we explain the New Testament's use of this term, the Son of Man? You see, nowhere in the available record do we find the early church calling Jesus the Son of Man.

[ 9 : 07 ] Except in the case of Stephen the martyr, who when he is dying looks up to heaven and says, I see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power. The title simply was not used by any congregations we know of in the first century.

They were using titles like Messiah, Christ, Lord, Son of God, Logos, Word. Now if the early church was putting words into Jesus' mouth, would they not put words into his mouth that they themselves were using?

Words like Messiah and Logos? But nowhere in the record do we find Jesus using such terms of himself. He is Messiah. He is the Logos, the Word.

But he does not explicitly say so. Yet 77 times he calls himself Son of Man. Thus, New Testament scholar Oscar Kuhlman can write.

This would be inexplicable if the gospel writers were really the first to attribute the title to Jesus as a self-designation. Actually, they have preserved the memory that only Jesus himself used it in this way.

[ 10 : 20 ] Now when we line up all the texts where Jesus refers to himself using this self-designation, we discover that more than any other title, it embraces the totality of his life in

ministry.

More than any other title. In using this title, Jesus is referring to his earthly life. But in using this title, he also refers to his future life.

And in using this title, he refers to a time before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Listen just for a moment to a litany of the Son of Man's sayings.

Don't try to get everything I'm going to now give you in the next few minutes. Just listen to this litany of Jesus' use of the term. On the first day the disciples encountered Jesus, Jesus says to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

To Nicodemus, a leading rabbi of the day, Jesus says, No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man. One day, Jesus and his disciples have broken some of the Pharisees' Sabbath laws.

[11:37] And Jesus says, the Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath. Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. And Mark tells us the Pharisees were furious.

Another time, four men lowered their paralyzed friend down before Jesus. And to their surprise, and to the horror of the watching authorities, Jesus says, My child, your sins are forgiven.

And then in defense of that action, Jesus says, The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. The crowds who follow Jesus after the feeding of the 5,000, To the crowds, after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus says, Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. Does this cause you to stumble? What if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where he was before?

As Jesus makes his way from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem, He says, At least three times, The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of people. They will kill him.

[12:50] He will be raised on the third day. Along the way to the holy city, the disciples are debating among themselves about who will be great in this kingdom the Son of Man is bringing. And Jesus says, Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant.

Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to serve, but to be served, but to serve and give his life for ransom for many.

A few days before entering into the city of Jerusalem, Jesus has a dinner with Zacchaeus, the tax collector. And in defense of those scandalous actions, Jesus says, The Son of Man came to seek and save that which is lost.

During Passover week, just before going to the cross, Jesus begins to talk about the end. Listen to these things. For just as the lightning comes from east and flashes to the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man.

But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, the power of heaven will be shaken, then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.

[13:55] And all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of the sky with great power and great glory. For this reason you be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

And then, the words Jesus speaks at His trial. After being asked by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel, Are you the blessed one?

Are you the Son of the blessed one? Jesus says, Listen, I am, and you shall see, the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

Mark, Matthew, and Luke tell us that after tearing his robes, the high priest cries out blasphemy, and the court charges Jesus with this blasphemy and sends Him to capital punishment.

Why? Why did the religious authorities react so violently to Jesus' use of this term, the Son of Man? What did this term mean to people in the first century?

[14:58] Well, there are two basic ideas that come to first century minds when they hear this term, Son of Man. The first is that this was simply a Hebraic, Aramaic way of saying human being.

The psalmist asked in Psalm 8, What is man that thou art mindful of him and the Son of Man that thou dost care for him? Man and Son of Man are in parallel. So, God even refers to the prophet Ezekiel as Son of Man 90 times.

Human being. In using this of Himself, Jesus is therefore affirming His total solidarity with us. He's affirming His full and real humanity.

Now, this first basic line of meaning led some of the earliest Christian theologians to couple the term Son of Man with Son of God so that Son of Man, Son of God was a way of affirming the full humanity and the full divinity of Jesus Christ.

So, for example, Irenaeus of the 4th century once said, excuse his non-inclusive language, For your sakes, the Son of God became the Son of Man in order that sons of men might become sons of God.

[16:06] The writer of the hymn, Ferris Lord Jesus, seems to use it in that way. But the fact is, this line of thought misses the heart of the matter. For although meaning human being, Son of Man means so much more, so much more.

You see, of the 77 times, Jesus uses the term 76 times, he uses it with the definite article, the. I am the Son of Man, not just a Son of Man.

Which leads us then to the second basic idea triggered by this title. The Son of Man reminded first century people of a special figure in the drama of the salvation of the world.

The Son of Man reminded people of the special figure we meet in the prophet Daniel. In the 17th chapter of his book, Daniel tells us that one night God gave him a vision.

A vision that affects the whole of world history. In the vision, Daniel sees four beasts. These beasts represent world empires. In the vision, the four beasts are brought before the ancient of days, before the living God, and they are judged.

[17:20] One of the beasts is crushed, and the rest lose their dominion. And then, in verses 13 and 14 of Daniel 7, we are taken into this remarkable scene.

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, one like a Son of Man, one like a Son of Man was coming.

He came up to the ancient of days and was presented before him. And to him, this one like a Son of Man was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages might serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. Amazing. That whole vision is centered in one like a Son of Man.

One like. Daniel has to use this word like because he has no adequate way to describe what he sees. One like a Son of Man. The prophet sees this towering, commanding, redeeming figure that is human life.

[18:23] Human-like. Now, soon after Daniel wrote and then published this vision, people stopped using the longer term, one like a Son of Man, and simply used the term the Son of Man.

Now, looking at Daniel 7, 13 to 14, notice carefully everything Daniel says about the Son of Man. Notice, for instance, that he comes with the clouds of heaven.

This is crucial to see. In the Bible, clouds are regularly associated with the presence of the divine. Whenever God met with Moses in the tabernacle in the wilderness, this cloud would come and envelope the meeting area.

Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven. He comes riding a divine chariot, if you will. The imagery is suggesting the superhuman majesty of this one who is like a human.

The imagery is suggesting this figure's supernatural origin and divine likeness. Now, notice how this one like a Son of Man acts when he comes into the presence of the ancients of days.

[19:33] The rabbis observe that he does not bow. Why not? Because he is a peer of the ancients of days? The rabbis also notice that he does not confess his sin.

The first thing Isaiah wants to do when he's brought into the throne room of God is confess his sin. Whoa, it's me, I'm a sinful man. Why does this one like a Son of Man not confess sin? Because he's sinless?

Notice that to this one is given dominion and glory and kingdoms. Unlike the kingdoms God gives to other humans, this kingdom cannot be destroyed.

This kingdom will not pass away. And notice that all peoples, languages, nations are to serve this Son of Man. All. He is worthy of universal worship.

All peoples will end up worshipping and serving him. Who is this person? Who is this one who comes with a divine investiture?

[ 20 : 37 ] Who is this one who comes up to the ancients of days and does not bow or confess his sin? Who is this one to whom is given an everlasting kingdom? Who is this one whom all the nations of the world will worship?

Well, as you can imagine, there was from the time that Daniel's vision was published a great deal of speculation about the identity of this central figure of history.

By the first century, the term Son of Man came to mean, listen, it came to mean a heavenly, preexistent, divine being who would come at the end of the age to inaugurate the kingdom of God. I'm going to say that again. By the first century, Son of Man meant a heavenly, preexistent, divine being who would come at the end of the age to inaugurate the kingdom of God.

And so, German scholar Ethelbert Stauffer can write, Son of Man is just about the most pretentious piece of self-description that any man in the ancient Near East can possibly use.

[ 21 : 52 ] The most pretentious self-designation. Sisters and brothers, only one person in history ever dared to use that term of himself.

Only one. In light of the meaning of the term, we're not surprised then that Jesus is always talking about the kingdom. He's the Son of Man who comes to bring the kingdom.

What's his first sermon? One line. Mark 1.15. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come near. Of course, the Son of Man comes to bring the kingdom of God. We're not surprised that Jesus, this man of compassion, is always talking about judgment.

Of course. For the Son of Man comes to judge all the nations of the world. And we're not surprised that Jesus, as the Son of Man, is always making himself the issue of the judgment.

Again and again and again, he claims that what individuals and nations do with him will be the criteria of judgment. That's the point of his famous parable of the sheep and goats, which begins, when the Son of Man sits on his throne, he will judge the nations.

[ 23 : 07 ] As the Son of Man, he will separate the nations and the basis for the nation's judgment will be what nations have done with him as he came to them in the person of the powerless.

Well, now we can appreciate why the religious authorities reacted so violently to Jesus' use of this term. Are you the Son of the Blessed One? I am and you will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.

Jesus was claiming to be that powering figure in Daniel's vision. He claims to be the preexistent heavenly peer of God to whom is given an everlasting kingdom.

He claims to be this sinless one who has the right to judge every nation and to exercise authority over all the earth. He was on trial before the highest of religious courts but when he dared to use that term Son of Man of himself the tables were changed and the court was now on trial before him. Blasphemy they charged and the human court sentences the divine judge to death. One of, if not, the greatest ironies of history. There's more to the irony though.

[ 24 : 21 ] Remember when I read that litany of Son of Man sayings? Remember the saying the Son of Man will be killed? Actually the way Jesus puts it three times the Son of Man must be killed.

It confused the disciples because nowhere in Daniel's vision does the Son of Man suffer. That's why Peter says no Lord this shall never happen to you. But in that one line the Son of Man must suffer we discover the gospel.

Jesus is this glorious Son of Man the judge of all the world but he comes into the world to suffer first as he says in Mark 10 45 not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.

In Daniel's vision all the peoples of the world serve him. Jesus turns everything upside down and instead serves the world by giving his life a ransom.

What does that mean? It means that the judge changes places with us. It means that he puts himself in the place of the defendants and suffers the punishment for our sins.

[ 25 : 33 ] He ransoms our lives by giving himself away. The rightful judge of the whole world took upon himself the very judgment he decrees. As the Son of Man Jesus Christ has authority to execute judgment and he comes and to everyone's surprise he exercises that authority by executing that judgment against himself.

The Son of Man. What does it mean for us today and tomorrow and Tuesday that Jesus chose to call himself this?

Let me suggest three words around which the practical implications of this title can be gathered. The three words are authority perspective and decision.

Authority. As the Son of Man Jesus has final authority over all of life. He is the final authority over all of life. He says after his resurrection all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Jesus will not be boxed up in the private religious spheres of life. He will not stay there. Let all the great church leaders have their say about what it means to be the church in our time.

[ 26 : 57 ] When Jesus the Son of Man comes to the podium his word is the last word. Let all the great sociologists and psychologists have their say about what it means to be a human being in our time.

When Jesus the Son of Man comes to the podium his word is the last word. Let all the great philosophers and gurus have their say about the meaning of life when Jesus the Son of Man comes to the podium his word is the last word.

Let all the great political and military leaders of the world have their say about how to achieve justice and peace. Let them all have their turn in the United Nations General Assembly when Jesus of Nazareth comes to the podium his word is the last word.

audacious pretentious only if he's wrong about himself. After he finished preaching his sermon on the mount the people who heard him the people who heard words that cut across the grain of everything they understood about living life in this world said to Jesus of Jesus this man speaks with authority not as our scribes and Pharisees this man speaks with authority because this man is the Son of Man perspective knowing Jesus as the Son of Man puts our lives in perspective rulers and empires will come and go but the kingdom of the Son of Man will last forever it cannot be destroyed his resurrection from the dead proves that the new world order inaugurated by Jesus the Son of Man will never end which means that if we live for that kingdom we never live in vain all that is out of sync with the kingdom of the Son of Man will one day be blown away into thin air but all that is in sync with his rule will be taken up into his eternal kingdom and live forever thus Desmond Tutu long before he became a celebrity long before he won the Nobel Peace Prize

Desmond Tutu could walk into the office of the minister of law in order into the office of the man who enforced the policy of apartheid and say Mr. Minister we must remind you that you are not God you are just a man and one day your name shall be a faint scribble on the pages of history while the name of Jesus Christ will go on forever and ever the future is secure it ends at the feet of the Son of Man authority perspective and decision so what are we going to do with him he shows up in every sphere of life and he keeps asking the question he asked his disciples at Caesarea Philippi who do people say the Son of Man is what are you going to do with me today in this sphere do you believe that I am who I am will you follow me will you trust me will you trust your relationships to me will you trust your career to me will you trust your finances to me will you trust the future to me your future two weeks after that tear filled lunch in the Mexican restaurant in Manila

[ 30 : 26 ] Mansour attended a full gospel business person's luncheon and after a simple clear presentation of the cost and call of discipleship the speaker asked if anyone was prepared to respond to Jesus Mansour stood up all six feet three inches of him stretched his hands into the air and said I love you Jesus I am yours and I risk it all to follow you what else can you say to the son of man let us pray God Save were they or do what else

Once again, dear Jesus, you keep getting bigger and bigger.

And the implications of who you are keep getting more and more massive. You know our hearts.

Grant that we too love you and risk it all for you.

We look forward to that day when your name is spoken by the entire universe and when you finally are given the praise you deserve.

[ 33 : 09 ] Amen.